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ABSTRACT

Within the system of higher education, the humanistic disciplines are an essential subsystem; a subsystem, however, on which the current emphasis on laborforce relevance is having particularly detrimental effects. The current state of the humanistic disciplines may be characterized as that of a state of recession. Some of the external factors contributing to the recession are the declining birthrate, inflation, and problems with financial support; within the field, problems of overspecialization and subsequent lack of marketable skills, and conflicts among educators about educational goals add to the condition. A first step in working out of the recession is for educators to establish for themselves goals and priorities centering around "anthrocentric" undergraduate education. This focus would foster moral, aesthetic, and cognitive development while contributing to the quality of the laborforce; this is opposed to the "contentcentric" approach, which argues that humanistic education is an end in itself. A second step in revitalizing undergraduate humanistic education, is a concentration on instructional/curricular innovations which would focus on value clarification and contemporary ethical problem-solving with a view toward the future. Anthrocentric education thus requires that specialist and research competencies not be the primary criteria for the selection of professors for these undergraduate courses. A bibliography is included. (MB)

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POLICY DEVELOPMENT IN THE HUMANISTIC DISCIPLINES: TOWARD ANTHROCENTRIC UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION

by

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM"

JC 780 595

OVERVIEW

A major intellectual and social development occurring in the last half of the twentieth century is a greatly heightened interest in the future.[1] The heightened interest in the future reveals itself in many ways: through the popularity of science fiction; through efforts to build models to project what the future will be like; and of central interest here, through efforts to plan social development.

The attempt to rationally define goals and plan the future of a society has been stimulated by numerous factors. Such factors as the increasing complexity and size of social institutions, the accelerating pace of change, the anxiety aroused by the existence of new ominous means of destruction and (with interdependence) the increasing costliness of human error, have made deliberate social planning a significant and growing activity.[2] The scarcity of resources both natural and monetary also stimulates the trend toward social planning.[3] In the highly industrialized nations the perception of a diminishing quality of life serves to stimulate social planning. This may sound paradoxical since the expanding degree of social planning is often cited as a constituent of the poorer quality of life.[4] But the inescapable reality of the complexity of modern society seems to require social planning to even get

us away from the danger of social planning.

The bureacratization of social life is occuring at an ever increasing pace in response to the need for social planning. Caryl Haskins' theory of social development indicates t at growth leads to complexity, complexity to specialization and specialization to integration.[5] Interdependent social units require coordination of functions if the social system is to avoid dysfunctions: i.e. avoid obstacles to the achievement of social goals, survival goals in particular.

The process of policy formation is the central process in bureacratic systems for coordinating and directing the development of a social system. Policymaking is the process by which individual social units' assigned functions, goals, missions, purposes or objectives are determined. The structure of the social unit must then be organized in order to promote the assigned function. Policy formation is a political process, a process of adjusting conflicting values and needs toward the determination of appropriate levels of resource allocations and structural limitations.[6]

Policy issues regarding American institutions of higher education are receiving unprecedented public attention.

For the most part forces external to higher education seek to define the higher education system as a handmaiden of the economy. According to Leslie and Miller "...a society evolving in technological and sociological complexity must be accompanied by a social institution able to keep pace with

the demands for skilled and enlightened manpower... ."[7] The higher education system is the social institution being "pegged" to provide the laborforce needs of the nation.

Leslie and Miller try to document the case for the proposition that the American system of higher education will successfully adapt to the laborforce production needs of society. Their argument is based on the principle of transverse progression: "Overall growth must continue to occur in essential social systems so long as the society itself continues to progress, as opposed to decay."[8] Higher education is viewed to be such an essential social system precisely because it is relied upon to provide for laborforce needs. Innovations will develop within higher education to satisfy the economic demands of the age.

The higher education community enters the policy formation process and participates in the shaping of the future of American society and the place of higher education in that future. Leslie and Miller indicate that "...higher education responds not only by meeting perceived needs, but also by defining them, that is, by...balanc[ing] the fullfillment of [perceived] needs...with the responsible criticism of those perceptions."[9]

The higher education community seeks to define the higher education system as having additional functions beyond providing the laborforce needs of the nation. Higher education functions to educate an informed and responsible citizen-

ry; to encourage responsible social criticism; and to be a center for the development of knowledge and the arts. These functions, the higher education community urges, need to be included in any policy for higher education.

Within the system of higher education the humanistic disciplines would appear to be an essential subsystem. For it is on these disciplines that the higher education system relies to carry out essential parts of all three functions. Some object to the responsibility being placed solely on the shoulders of the humanistic disciplines. Boyer, McGrath and others argue that all disciplines must become involved in promoting the functions like encouraging responsible social criticism. This objection does not e rase the point that the currently structured humanistic disciplines will remain the core of any higher education attempt to promote such goals.

The humanistic disciplines are a subsystem of higher education on which the emphasis on the laborforce relevance of higher education is having particularly detrimental effects. The first section attempts to document the case that the current state of the humanistic disciplines may be characterized as that of a state of recession. The second section presents external and internal factors contributing to the recession with an emphasis on those factors which humanistic discipline educators believe they have some control over.

An adapted application of the principle of transverse

progression implies that the humanistic disciplines will resume growth if the higher education system as a whole continues to grow.

A first step in the direction of working out of the recession is for humanistic discipline educators (here termed 'humanists') to establish goals and priorities for themselves. Humanists, thus, contribute tc the larger higher education policy by working to retain their important position in the higher education system. The current policy development issues being discussed by humanists are presented and evaluated in the third section. It is concluded that the policy for the humanistic disciplines should center around the aim of heightening the emphasis on what is termed 'anthrocentric' undergraduate education. The fourth section presents various pitfalls humanists believe they must be careful to avoid.

The second step toward working out of the recession is to plan innovations or changes directed toward implementing the chosen policy. Leslie and Miller present five types of innovations based on Schumpeter's Theory of Economic Development which they believe the higher education system uses to foster growth.[10] The various efforts and proposals, categorized in the fifth section, for revitalizing education in the humanistic disciplines conform to the expectations of the Leslie and Miller model.

It would appear, then, that the outlook for the future of the humanistic disciplines is far less grim than many of the authors listed in the bibliography have supposed.

I

The rate of enrollment increase in American institutions of higher education began to fall in 1965 and has been declining dramatically since 1970.[11] The indications are "...that higher education will progress from modest enrollment increases in the 1970's to either slight or major decline in the 1980's."[12]

It appears that not all academic disciplines are being equally affected by the trend of enrollment stabilization. HEGIS data concerning students' choices of field areas for the Bachelor's degree show that during a period of overall enrollment growth the share of Bachelor's degrees being earned has declined in the humanistic disciplines. Between 1970-71 and 1973-74 the total number of Bachelor's degrees awarded rose 108,266. For the same period the number of degrees awarded in the category of letters (which includes the "verbal" humanistic disciplines) fell by 8,073.[13] This represents an 11% decrease. Enrollment data for two-year colleges shows that the arts and humanities have a reduced share of total enrollments in 1974-75 when compared to the previous academic year.[14] NCES reports that other areas such as mathematics show declines as well.

While the NCES data do not indicate enrollments <u>per se</u> they do indicate that humanities fields, as well as others,

have suffered a significant decrease in the number of majors completing their programs. It can be argued that the decline affecting humanistic disciplines is more severe than that affecting mathematics, for example. For it appears that a major factor behind recent shifts in student major selection is student responsiveness to labor market conditions.[15] Health professions, which are highly in demand now, show an increase of 64% in the number of Bachelor's degrees awarded between 1970-71 and 1973-74.[16] Such disciplines as mathematics provide more service courses to the students in these other programs than have humanistic desciplines. Thus the decline in majors in mathematics may not represent as drastic a decline in enrollments as for the humanistic disciplines. A number of authors confirm the point that enrollments are declining in humanistic disciplines.[17] Further consequences reported have been declining numbers of faculty positions and the loss of grant money.[18]

The size of the bibliography of recent articles concerned with the "things are bad in the humanistic disciplines, what can we do" issue is evidence that humanistic academic professionals are feeling the pinch of the current transition period in American higher education to a high degree. It is apt to term the current state of the humanistic disciplines 'recession.'

II

In large part the situation humanists find themselves in is due to circumstance beyond their control. They are not a large enough segment of the population to significantly effect the birth rates and thus the size of the college age cohort. Nor are they able to significantly affect the rate of inflation. Nor are humanists a powerful enough political force to significantly influence governmental policies regarding the financing of American higher education. Since these three external factors are largely responsible for the recession situation in American higher education, any sense of self-blame on the part of humanists would seem to be unjustified.

Yet humanists are currently in the middle of a period of self-examination and self-criticism and self-blame. The major categories of issues arising from this self-examination are presented below. Each category is viewed by humanists to be one contributing to the continuance of the recession they find themselves in. Each category is an avenue on which improvement can be achieved and progress toward alleviating the recession can be made.

The liberal arts, liberal education and general education movements emphasized humanistic studies. Such studies were valued for their supposed beneficial impact on individual and social development. A wide range of social critics have argued that our age is far from the ideal envision-

ed by champions of humanistic education. Our age is characterized by alienation, fragmentation, anomie, and anxiety.[19] Boyer has characterized the current social malaise by calling it a "hypertrophy of individualism."[20] Lasch maintains that: "The best in bourgeois culture [has] evaporated, we are left with a culture poisoned by its dregs... ."[21] Somehow the humanist tradition has failed to achieve through the educational process the noble humanistic aims.[22] Anderson says "... the humanities have failed to humanize."[23] Social and cultural shifts have drawn people away from humanistic concerns. The humanities have lost touch with the pulse of the people, the tempo of the times.[24] As a result they have failed to foster a recognition of the value of humanistic education and are suffering from lack of administrative, student and public support.[25]

How have humanists failed? In their self-examination two related answers emerge. Humanists have failed, first of all, to educate people to the dangers of the socio-economic trend toward specialization and fragmentation. In fact, humanistic disciplines have joined the specialization movement. Secondly, humanists have been internally divided as to which educational goals and policies they should pursue.

Academic specialization tends to isolate researchers and teachers in various fields from one another; constructing barriers of language and methodology.[26] It also serves to isolate and break down the communications between the academic

community and the general population.[27]

The trend toward academic specialization has been heightened and interrelated with the trend toward increasing vocational specialization.[28] Academic careers have become increasingly specialized and elite occupations. The general population has also responded to the changing nature of work and has increasingly demanded educational programs that will lead to marketable skills.[29] Except for those who choose certain academic careers, students pursue non-humanistic courses of study. Thus, vocational specialization has had a decidedly negative impact on the humanistic disciplines.[30]

The final factor contributing to the recession, in the eyes of humanists, is the fact that the humanistic community is divided as to what its aims should be.[31] The debate will be fully discussed in the next section. There are basically two orientations competing for humanists' allegiance: the contentcentric and the anthrocentric. Let it suffice here to note that the lack of a "united front" is viewed by some to be a detriment to alleviating the recession.

III

The current policy debate participants can be divided into two broad camps.[32] There are those who argue that education in the humanistic disciplines is justified relative to the extrinsic aims promoted. That is, education in the humanistic disciplines is viewed to be a means to certain ends. The ends served may be broadly termed human and social development. Education in the humanistic disciplines is held to foster social cohesion through its emphasis on cultural heritage; foster moral and aesthetic and cognitive development; and contribute to the sophistication and quality of the citizen laborforce. Those in this camp will be termed advocates of anthrocentric undergraduate education. The other camp is composed of those who argue that education in the humanistic disciplines is an end in itself. The humanistic disciplines pursue truth and seek knowledge, or, as Goosens puts it, "...teach a certain form of productive creativity."[33] Those in this camp will be termed advocates of contentcentric education.

The anthrocentric orientation emphasizes that education in the humanistic disciplines should serve the best interests of individual persons and society. This can be done by fostering a sense of community: a sense of common bonds. For any healthy social system requires a social cohesion that grows out of shared perspectives and values.[34] Anthrocentric

education should be education for interdependence as well as education for individual independence and liberty.[35] This emphasis on interdependence is particularly important in the present due to the trends of fragmentation and specialization that have served to erect barriers to the experience of commonality and community in contemporary life.

Education in the humanistic disciplines should also be concerned with educating people to be mature participants in the shared process of shaping society's destiny.[36] This can only occur through an educational process that is seen to contribute to the moral sensitivity of the developing citizenry.[37] The development of critical judgement is held to be another necessary condition.[38] And an awareness of the socio-historical context of contemporary life is required for mature judgement and participation in society.[39] McGrath and Marcus further emphasize that these factors stand in particular need of reemphasis to combat the (what within bounds are reasonable) claims of value neurality in the disciplines.[40]

Humanistic education has long concerned itself with contributing to students' career functioning.[41] The classical curriculum of Harvard during the early days of American history served to enhance the professional lives of its students. Doctors, ministers and lawyers were believed to function better through a broad education.

Whitehead held that technical education and theoretical education were inseparable.[42] Doing and understanding are not

separable human capacities. Yet in an age dominated by vocational and academic specialization doing and understanding within narrow bounds has been emphasized to the exclusion of broad perspective and understanding. The advocates of the anthrocentric approach hold that higher education has a responsibility to inform the practice of students career functioning: To contribute a broad cultural-historical-personal understanding to the life of action.[43]

Academic specialization has not occurred in a vacuum. On the one hand it has been encouraged by the trend to vocational specialization increasingly characteristic of contemporary society. On the other hand it has developed out of a philosophy of education which emphasizes the pursuit of knowledge as an end in itself. This philosophy traces its modern origins to the German research university ideal. Bousma argues that "...the secularization of the humanities" should be accepted. The humanistic disciplines "...can still provide welcome nourishment for the shifting intellectural, emotional, and aesthetic needs of citizens whose ultimate values are drawn from other sources."[44] The vision of humanizing through humanistic education is not appropriate in the 20th century academic setting. Condic and Goosens take up the argument and claim that the search for truth and educating students for productive creative intellection must remain the central aims of the humanistic disciplines. For without these central academic values the humanistic disciplines, and all other disci-

plines, will become prostitutes and loose their social critic function and academic freedom.

The debate is a conflict of values. The contentcentric group emphasizes the values of the automony of professional standards and ideals and academic freedom. Though these aims are held to be valued as ends in themselves, in the final analysis, it appears that extrinsic justifications apply here also. For, the long-run well being of civilizations and individuals is held to depend upon the possession of truth, and maintaining the autonomy of professional pursuers of truth is maximally conducive to this aim.

There is no fundamental incompatibility between the two emphases. Both sets of values are vital to the well being of civilization and individuals. But there is a real danger that proximately focused social values (e.g. education for making a living) may be promoted in ways that threaten the more comprehensive values of the anthrocentric (e.g. educations for making a good life) and even the contentcentric orientations. Individual and social needs that are pressing command more attention and support from the public than more remote needs. Professionalized academia is highly dependent upon social support. Disregard for proximate social needs may be the surest way for academia to lose the social support necessary to continue its institutionalized pursuit of knowledge. It can be argued that the pursuit of knowledge will always survive. But it seems foolish strategy to act in ways

jeapordizing the degree of social support professional academia now enjoys: an historically unprecedented degree of support. Serving the legitimate proximate needs of society in intellectually respectable and professionally integretous ways may be the best way to protect academia's advantageous social position. Therefore, humanists should strive to provide the education for survival, the anthrocentric undergraduate education that the social-moral and economic realities of the age demand. Graduate education remains the most appropriate place to develop the specialized capabilities of students built upon a solid anthrocentric foundation.

IV

A number of writers maintain that emphasis on disciplinary specialization can thwart the achievement of the goals of anthrocentric education.[45] Disciplinary specialization rests on a specialized language, conceptual framework and methodology. Undergraduate students are far from possessing such sophisticated languages, frameworks and methodologies. And, for the most part, do not need an in depth acquaintance with the more craft oriented dimensions of them. Lasch and Scully argue that the trend to specialization contributes to the erection of barriers to communication in society and among the academic disciplines themselves.[46] Somehow the value of "technical ingenuity and skill" developed in the disciplines must be passed on to undergraduate students while retaining a connection with the concerns that motivate students.[47] What Lenz calls the "privatization" of the disciplines must be combated if the anthrocentric functions are to be promoted.[48] Thus, the rigors of specialization must be restrained within reasonable bounds in undergraduate education.

Demands for accountability, like needs for specialization, are not evils in themselves. Rather they are things that when overemphasized or improperly emphasized thwart rather than enrich undergraduate education. This is particularly the case when dealing with the goals of anthrocentric undergraduate

education.[49] Great care must be taken lest simplistic criteria be applied to complex processes. The relevant behaviors and dispositions which it is the aim of anthrocentric undergraduate education to promote are not amenable to laboratory condition observation or skill proficiency checklisting and many emerge in the student's life after graduation.

McGrath and others maintain that currently the balance of emphasis between career related objectives aimed at meeting the laborforce needs of society and the aims of anthrocentric education is lopsided in favor of career related objectives.[50] The primacy of the goal of preparing undergraduate students for their place in the economy can turn out to require educational programs that tend to fail to achieve the aims of anthrocentric education; even for students of the humanistic disciplines.[51] Such an overemphasis is seen to endanger society and limit the individual. Overtechnical training that neglects an anthrocentric base does not expose the student to the human-historical-moral context of contemporary life and work.[52]

Institutions of higher education are generally receiving a more diverse student clientele than ten years ago.[53] Today's undergraduate students are highly oriented to the career relevance of their education.[54] The challenge confronting the humanistic disciplines is how to provide an experience of anthrocentric undergraduate education to students with widely varying backgrounds, goals and aptitudes.[55]

The traditions of graduate education stimulate the disciplinary specialist orientation, the contentcentric orientation, of college faculties; and justifiably so. But to too great a degree research and graduate teaching, not undergraduate teaching, have been the sole aim of graduate education.[56] As a result undergraduate faculties are unprepared, to a high degree, to teach anthrocentrically oriented courses.[57]

V

Instructional-curricular innovations represent the largest category of proposals for revitalizing undergraduate education to achieve the anthrocentric aims. Several key concepts emerge from a review of the literature. One is 'values.' Splete, Middleberg and Krischenbaum propose that courses in the humanistic disciplines specifically adopt value centering or value clarification as their central aim. Bennett and Sugnet propose that courses in the humanistic disciplines deal with contemporary ethical delimas. This introduces the second major category: the category 'problems.' McGrath, Boyer, Buchen, Birnbaum and Eurich all propose a contemporary problem centered curriculum in which the third key concept emerges: viz. the 'future.' All of these problem centered proposals are in one way or another interdisciplinary.[58] 'Heritage' is still considered important but the current emphasis is on finding the "meaning" of heritage through confronting the problems of today: the more traditional approach would be to seek the "meaning" of today through a study of heritage.

Extracurricular avenues are now being supported to a higher degree, primarily through "non-educational" agencies. Lenz reports on the National Endowment for the Humanities' programs designed to get humanists "out of the closet." Woodward reports on the Hastings Institute of Society Ethics and

Life Sciences. Both provide public education functions promoting anthrocentric goals but in non-traditional ways. Cohen (5) urges community college humanists to pursue such avenues and for institutions to support these non-traditional educational efforts.[59]

Anthrocentric education requires that specialist competencies not be the sole or primary criteria for the selection of undergraduate professors. Nor should research competency be the central focus of teacher training programs.[60] The current reward system is however built on contentcentric values.[61] There must be an acceptance in the higher education community of the centrality of teaching if the aims of anthrocentric undergraduate education are to be achieved. Humanists are increasingly devoting themselves to the aim of promoting anthrocentric undergraduate education.[62]

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2. Ibid, p.128.
3. See Meadows, et. al.
4. See Truitt and Solomons.
5. Perkins and Israel, p.4.
6. Blocker, Bender and Martorana, p.v.
7. Leslie and Miller, p.20.
8. Ibid, pp.1-2.
9. Ibid, p.28.
10. Ibid, pp.25-43.
11. Ibid, p.6.
12. Ibid, p.11. See also, Carnegie's More Than Survival.
13. NCES, pp.5-7.
14. Parker, 1974 p.23, 1975 p.25.
15. See Freeman.
16. NCES, pp.5-7.
17. Wear, p.32; Lenz, p.52; Hollister, p.24; Cohen (4), p.7.
18. Lenz, p. 52.
19. See Hendin, Boyer, Poznar, McGrath (3) and Frankel.
20. Boyer, p.29.
21. Lasch, p.22.
22. See McGrath (1,2,3).
23. Anderson (2), p.2.
24. See Birnbaum, Cranston, Change, and Bowen.
25. See Cohen (5).
26. See Snow.
27. See Lasch (and in relation to Lasch, Dobzhansky.
28. See Freeman.
29. Ibid.
30. See DeMott, Freeman, Lenz and Marcus.
31. See Marx, Birnbaum, and Grover.
32. See Brubacher.

33. Goosens, p.5.
34. See Schwab, and Buchen, p.136.
35. Boyer, p.22; Anderson (1), p.35.
36. See Boyer, Martia, and Adams, p.340.
37. Bok, pp.26-28; Splete, p118; Poznar, p.20 and Middleberg, p.238.
38. Bennett, p.67; De Bary, p.43.
39. See Harvard; Pirsig, p.33.
40. McGrath (3), p.vii; Marcus, p.24.
41. See Hofstadter and Hardy.
42. See Millard, Pichler, and Gross.
43. See particularly Adams, Goldberg, McGrath (1,2,3), and McNamara.
44. Bousma, p.60.
45. See Anderson (1), Bennett, Grover and Marcus.
46. Lasch, p.62; Scully, p.3.
47. Schneewind, p.48.
48. Lenz, p.52.
49. See Bennett.
50. McGrath (1), p.282.
51. See Lasch, Cohen (5), McGrath (1), and Bowen.
52. Martia, p.14; Murchland, p.75; and Adams, p.339.
53. See Leslie.
54. See Halstead, Astin, Crandall (1), and Cohen (4).
55. See Quimby, p.58.
56. See McGrath (2).
57. See McGrath (3), Cohen (3), Pirsig and Marx.
58. See also Crandall, Koltai, Thiroux, Holton, and Bayerl.
59. See also Marx, Sugnet, and Change.
60. See McGrath (3), Epstein, and Eurich.
61. Meeth, pp.2-3; see also Poznar, and Hollister.
62. The Janurary 9, 1978 Chronicle reports the recent founding of the American Association for the Advancement of the Humanities. Excerpts from its prospectus highlight and reinforce the major themes of this essay.---"There is no visible community of humanists, and the case for the significance of the humanities is not being made. [Humanists] are fragmented among specialized disciplines, are unable to make their views and accomplishments known widely, and are reluctant to engage, as professionals, the larger issues of their society. As a result, humanities scholars and teachers are perceived to be uninterested in relating their expertise and experience to matters of broad public conern. Their work is often dismissed as peripheral to important public questions and is considered luxurious elitism rather than an essential resource for the society."

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